

A Review of the Website “My Water Quality: Is It Safe to Swim In Our Waters?” With Suggestions for Improvement

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While looking at the My Water Quality Portal, I noticed that parts of it are confusing and/or vague. I have some suggestions for improving the water quality portal that you may want to consider.

1. **Home Page:** The questions asked on the right side are vague and the information behind the link doesn't necessarily answer the question. Suggestion: Either rephrase the questions or instead of questions, list each topic out without a question. This will be much more user friendly (ex. 1. Long term bacterial trends of lakes, beaches, or streams 2. Beach, lake or stream closures by county 3. Currently impaired rivers etc.) If you would like to keep the question format, I have some suggestions for how to change them in the bullets below.
 - a. In addition, the map on the homepage needs a stronger title and description about what the information in the map shows, preferably at the top of the page, with the map underneath it.
2. **“Can I swim at my lake, beach, or stream?”:** can be addressed in all the other questions – possibly remove this question – too general. If you want somewhere to list general information, the home page should be the place to do this.
 - b. Clicking on this question leads to a link for beach closures, which is already addressed in a question of its own.
 - c. This question also leads to The Heal the Bay report card which is already found under the second question.
3. **“How Clean was my Beach, Lake, or Stream During the Past Week or Month?”**
Good question – but it would be better to individually link to the Heal the Bay and the Beach Watch Database on the home page. Or rephrase the question to something like “What are the current swim advisories of my beach, lake or stream?” (although this is also a vague question).
4. **“What are the long term bacteria trends at My Beach, Lake or Stream?”** The information needs to be rearranged and organized. I would put the information under the green text up at the top and then place the map and the description of the map side by side under that text. (a sentence in that paragraph does say “in the map below” even though the map is not actually below).
5. **“Which beaches, lakes and streams are currently closed by county health officials?”**
The only obvious problem with this is that only the beach counties are on the map, even though the title suggests information on lakes and streams would be available as well. You could add the rest of the counties throughout the state that might have information on lake and stream closures. If there is no information like this available then you could simply remove the ‘lakes and streams’ from the question.

6. **“Which Beaches, Lakes, and Streams Are Listed as Impaired for Bacterial Indicators?”**: The general public probably doesn’t know what “impaired” means, so a definition of that at the top would be extremely useful. Additionally, it might be good to give a different color for the beaches, lakes, and streams so that you can tell them apart.
7. **“Are the problems getting better?”** : Again, the information under this link doesn’t really answer the question asked, so maybe change the question to something like “What are the regulations and grants attributed to keeping our waters safe to swim”? Or place this information on the home page.